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## Book Reviews: The Angolan Revolution: Exile Politics and Guerrilla Warfare, 1962-1976 volume II by John Marcum

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# BOOK REVIEWS

Review by Prexy Nesbitt.

**The Angolan Revolution: Exile Politics and Guerrilla Warfare, 1962-1976, Vol II, by John Marcum, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1978, 473pp. \$30.00**

Speaking about the "lessons of Angola" at Harvard University in Washington in 1976, Walter Rodney commented, "There has been no serious analysis of the internal forces operating within Angola. . . We need to enter into a period of very serious self-criticism. We need to understand that what is happening in Zimbabwe, what is happening in the Republic of South Africa and Namibia, may evoke from us a similarly confused reaction if we are not serious about trying to raise the level of our analysis concerning the African continent."

In spite of certain critical limitations, which I will discuss later, John Marcum's *The Angolan Revolution: Exile Politics and Guerrilla Warfare, 1962-1976, Volume II* (MIT Press, Cambridge, 1978 473pp), is an asset as we examine and analyze Angola and subsequent dynamics on the African continent.

*Angolan Revolution: II* is well organized and exceedingly well documented. But then what else might one expect from John Marcum. For as far as the academic community is concerned he is clearly unmatched as the main source of information about Angolan nationalism. His first volume, written in 1969, *The Angolan Revolution: The Anatomy of an Explosion* (1950-1962), remains one of the few books available in English which outlines the early years of the modern Angolan nationalist movement.

This second volume must be read very carefully, for the 125 pages of notes at the back provide some of the most useful material in the book. Footnote number 191 on page 439, for example, reads:

Bender, "Kissinger and Angola," p.23. See also *New York Times*, March 10, 1976. One of the most dubious provisions in the July outlay (of the estimated \$31.7 million in CIA funds designated for Angola) was half a million dollars for propaganda activity to build up the images of the FNLA and UNITA. Such a buildup, which could be calculated to increase the political appeal of the two movements within the United States, seemed to do violence to the principle that the CIA should not become a

domestic lobbyist for foreign causes.

Or another point which illustrates the rich depth of information within the footnotes is a discussion about an Angolan trade unionist named Mauricio Luvualu, a UNITA sympathizer, who was approached by the CIA-linked African American Labor Center (AALC) in Luanda in October, 1974. This whole story of the AALC approaching this man, and finally deciding that he wasn't their type of material is fascinating in and of itself.

Marcum's work is not just reflective of his individual scholarship. It also serves to illustrate a general trait of bourgeois scholarship—especially American academic work on southern Africa. That is the desire and ability to accumulate tons of information while avoiding at all costs viewing it within any larger analytical framework. This may have something to do with the fact that such work is rarely widely distributed or used. (This current volume retails for \$30.00, and there is no paperback edition on the horizon.)

Thus, a major criticism which can be proffered is Marcum's apparent inability to place the events in Angola within a global context. Marcum shuns the concepts of "imperialism" and "intervention" like the plague. No connection is established between the statements of US policy-makers such as Brzezinski's oft-repeated "the United States has to play an active world role because if it doesn't there will be chaos," and the same official's preoccupation with wanting to cause Neto trouble

because of his Cuban backing. Throughout this book there is an avoidance mechanism at work whereby Marcum never identifies as insidious or purposeful any of the United States activities.

According to Marcum, the US financing of Roberto and Savimbi, the alliance with South Africa, the arming of Zaire to attack MPLA, all are part of an unintended "escalating chain of action." US policymakers realized they were trying to "shape events" but were too late to be able to disengage because "their prestige was on the line." This is the motivation for US involvement put forward by the author.

It is predictable—this form of scholarship—for ultimately it serves to maintain the status quo. John Marcum does not present and discuss facts such as: Kissinger's 1975 secret request to the Israeli government that they send troops to Angola to help the South Africans against the MPLA (see the *Economist*, November 5, 1977); or that a key target of UNITA propaganda was the critical black American community. Marcum also incorrectly accuses the black American organization, the Africa Information Service, of being a supporter of UNITA when in fact it supported MPLA.

Missing from what is otherwise excellent documentation are the texts from the Portuguese General Council for Counter-Subversion set up with CIA assistance in 1967. (Published as *Angola: Secret Government Documents on Counter-Subversion*, IDOC, Rome 1974.) These documents, the propaganda campaign cited above, and the secret maneuverings of the US government constitute part of a consistent pattern of behavior on the part of the United States and its Western allies. US intervention in Angola was not an aberration but part of the structural character of US foreign policy. As President Neto said in a famous 1974 speech at the University of Dar Es Salaam titled, "Who is the Enemy? What is Our Objective?" (included in the Appendix of Volume II):

"In my opinion, the national liberation struggle in Africa cannot be dissociated from the present context in which it is taking place; it cannot be isolated from the world. A worker's strike in England, the imposition of fascism on the Chilean people, or an atomic explosion in the Pacific, are all phenomena of this same life that we are living and in which we are seeking ways to a happy existence for man in this world. This universal fact is, however, rendered particular in Africa through current political, economic and cultural concepts."

But let me not dwell on John Marcum's political viewpoint. Only events and history itself will change that. The note I want to conclude on is that *The Angolan Revolution: Vol II* is critical reading. But read it critically. □



Holden Roberto: paid by the CIA.

The book review of *The Angolan Revolution: Exile Politics and Guerrilla Warfare, 1962-1976* by John Marcum published in the February issue was written by Prexy Nesbitt. His name was left off in error.